

May 15, 2013

Always Have a Valid Passport

I am about to send my 12 year old son to visit his grandparents in Jamaica for the summer. He will leave from New York this weekend and arrive in Kingston the same day. Yesterday I noticed that his U.S. passport expires in two weeks but he will be in Jamaica for the whole summer. Can I still send him to Jamaica, even though his passport is about to expire in a few days?

Yes, you can send your son to Jamaica, but you should start right away to get him documented for his return to the United States. The United States of America requires all U.S. citizens to enter and exit the United States on a valid U.S. passport, even if they are dual citizens of another country. The U.S. does not have “travel letters” or extend the validity of a passport for its citizens so it is imperative to make sure that passports are valid for the duration of the trip. If a U.S. citizen is abroad and they do not have a valid passport, they must apply for a new one at the U.S. Embassy in Kingston or the Consular Agency in Montego Bay before they can travel home. Depending on where and when the passport was filed on the island, this process can take anywhere from 1-4 weeks.

Appointments for a new passport are made online at <http://kingston.usembassy.gov/appointments.html>. The summer marks a busy time for travel and the U.S. Embassy in Kingston has a high demand for passport services during this time of the year. In summer months, you may have to wait several weeks to get an appointment though we do our best to keep our appointment wait times low.

Once you have made a passport appointment, please be sure that all required documents, fees and photos are prepared prior to your passport appointment. All requirements for passport applications should be reviewed our website, <http://kingston.usembassy.gov/service.html> , before applying. Since your son is under the age of 16 years old, all parents listed on the birth certificate must give permission for the child to obtain a new U.S. passport. If the parents are in the United States, they must provide notarized DS-3053 consent forms, copies of their driver's license or passports, and notarized letters authorizing the person who will assist the child obtain their passport. If the parents are in Jamaica they must accompany the child at the U.S. Embassy or Consular Agency on the appointment date. Please carefully look at the birth certificate to make sure it is in good condition; if the birth certificate is torn or very faded, you may have to obtain a new certificate. If the child's appearance has changed significantly since the time of his or her last passport application, please bring photos to demonstrate how the child has grown.

When preparing for travel, be sure to renew passports early. Do not take advice on U.S. passports from travel agents or relatives; the only official and reliable source of information about U.S. passports in Jamaica is the U.S. Embassy in Kingston or www.travel.state.gov .

For more information on passport services in Kingston Jamaica, please refer http://kingston.usembassy.gov/http/travel/passport/get/outside/outside_5462.html, this helpful website, you can make appointments, see required information, and complete forms online.

Please take advantage of our Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) where you can register your trip to receive emergency updates from the U.S. Embassy. This can also be useful for U.S. citizens living in foreign countries. To register for this free service, please log on to step.state.gov/step and click the create account tab.

For more information about American Citizen Services, please visit our website, <http://kingston.usembassy.gov/service.html> . For safety and security measures, the U.S. Embassy asks that all individuals arrive at the Embassy or Consular Agency no more than 15 minutes before their designated appointment time.